

How To Light Your Own Fire EVERY DAY

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INTRO

If there's one thing you cannot count on in life, it's that someone will be there to offer you encouragement, inspiration, and confidence when you need it most.

Sometimes we get do it from others... most of the time we don't.

But what you CAN count on... is you motivating yourself. You can become your own most dependable source of inspiration.

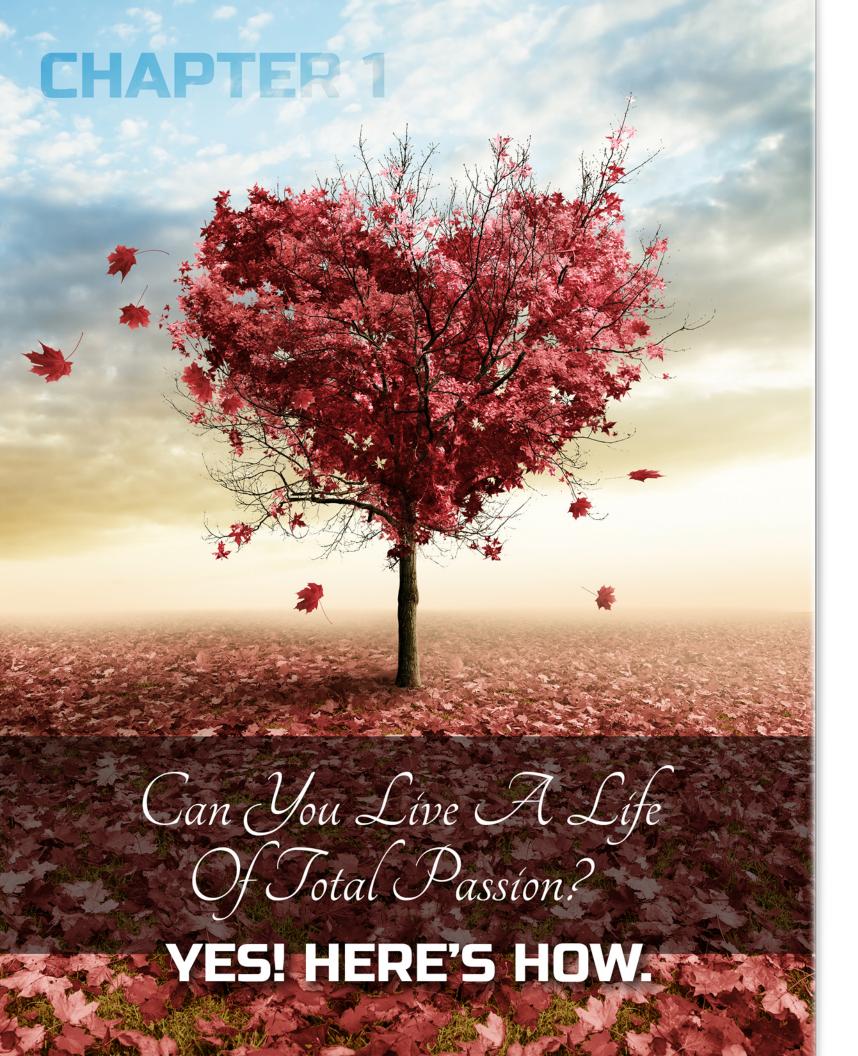
How? That's why we're here.

Hi, I'm Rick Houcek, president of Soar With Eagles. I help ambitious leaders and teams to be successful self-motivated achievers. And today, I'd like to share with you in this audio book, 9 savvy moves the most successful people use to light their own fires every day. For them, self-motivation is the only reliable resource. You can use all 9 savvy moves too, and they can help you improve your life and business.

I'll break it down into 9 chapters, each discussing one success point. We'll talk about... what lights your fire that you're most passionate about... daily behaviors to keep your fuel tank full... what's the common denominator of success in all endeavors... the importance of relentless pursuit... and so much more.

And every one of the 9 savvy moves I'll share... you can put into practice today. Right now. No waiting.

Are you ready? Let's get rolling.



More than 25 years ago, I toyed with this perplexing question:

Is it possible for a person to spend all your waking hours – from eyes open in the morning to eyes shut at night – doing only what you're passionate about – and nothing else?

At first, thinking it was an absurd pipe dream, I wrote it off as impossible. But weeks later, I found myself unwilling to let go of the possibility, so I revived the thought and dug deeper.

I decided I'd only need 4 things to do it...

- A razor sharp definition of what a passion is. (I checked the dictionary and was thoroughly disappointed. So I created my own riveting definition. More on that in a bit.)
- **2** Crystal clarity on what my own personal passions are, so I could easily separate them from non-passions.
- **3** An unbreakable, bullheaded commitment to myself every single morning to ONLY do what I'm passionate about today, and nothing else.
- Enough other dependable people in my life who could do FOR me all my non-passions that I still wanted or needed done, but derived no pleasure in doing myself. Preferably people who themselves were passionate about those very things that I wasn't, so they'd be done with eager excellence. I could hire them, trade services with them, or ask a favor.

Took me about 2 to 3 years to search, find, and vet the whole lot of them, but I did it. Now, many years later, I have an entire stable of reliable, go-to 'partners'. And yes, there are new ones coming into the fold all the time.

So, here's my own 5-part definition of what a passion is, and it can work for you.

A passion is something:

- You will eagerly make time for when no time exists, happily rearranging what you first considered 'immovable' commitments. For a passion, it's funny, they suddenly become moveable. But you won't move them for anything else.
- You spend a lot of money on. True passions are seldom cheap, and whether you budget for them or not, you give little thought to the expense.
- You're only willing to be excellent at, the best you can be. Mediocre performance or even above average is not an option for a passion. Excellence is the minimum standard.
- That ignites your body language when you talk about it. You light up like a Christmas tree because you're so excited. And you most enjoy talking to others who share your passion.

What hits a bullseye in all 5 of those for you?

For me, I have 4 life passions that nail all 5. And yes, I easily spend 90%+ of all my waking hours, every day, 7 days a week, actively involved in one or more.

They are:

- **Family:** Being a loving son, husband, father, father-in-law, and grandfather.
- **2** Fitness: Being healthy, fit, trim, vibrant, and energetic.
- **Business:** Invigorating the lives and organizations of ambitious leaders, teams, and high achievers, in visible and measurable ways, through my business pursuits.
- Baseball: Playing, enjoying, and excelling at men's senior baseball.

And all my supporting goals and actions – all of them – feed into those 4 passions. Or I don't do them. I delegate to someone else.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

What I did – discovering my passions, then committing to live them every day, and nothing else – and orchestrating my life accordingly – anybody can do. I'm not special, gifted, or more talented than the average Joe. I just decided to do it, pursued it with zeal, and refused to give up, or be talked out of it.

Result: I've been living a life of total passion for more than 20 years.

So why not you? Spend some quality time re-arranging your life to fit your passions? Walk through the same process I did. Be vigilant, stay with it, make it happen.

Makes for a great ride when you spend all your precious time doing only what you love most. Life's too short not to. You're worth it.

Oh, one last thought. We all need money to live, so if you're a breadwinner, then what you do for a living that drives your income ought to be one of your passions, don't you think? Is it? If it's not... R-I-I-I-ING... this is your wake-up call.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Oprah Winfrey, entrepreneur, TV talk show host, actress, producer, philanthropist: "Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you."

SAVVY MOVE #1

Get crystal clear on what your passions are... what energizes and electrifies you.
Then orchestrate your life... all your waking moments... to live and do only those.

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The famous quote "Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve" has been attributed mostly to Napoleon Hill, but also to authors W. Clement Stone and Og Mandino. Maybe others. (Heck, I wish I'd said it first.)

The words are powerful and true... that's all that matters. And although the author (whoever) meant it as inspiration to go after your dreams, the statement can mean the opposite too.

If you conceive failure, you'll likely move in that direction. So make sure what you're conceiving is an outcome you want, not one you don't want.

I've long seen the world as divided into two groups of people...

Those who are forward-looking, achievement-driven, learning-minded, action-takers.

And a second group who are stuck in today or yesterday, don't believe conditions can or will improve, and are convinced they are powerless to change or fix anything... so why try?

If you want more out of life, you need to be in the first group. The second group complains, blames, and finger-points – but never takes responsibility or ownership to fix.

I'm far from alone in my thinking...

ESPN's Colin Cowherd echoed these same sentiments on his radio show recently. He talked in terms of the U.S. being two nations – broken down pretty much as I described.

Carol Dweck, in her book "Mindset", further validates it. She's a leading world authority on personality and developmental psychology, and defines the two groups as growth-minded and fixed-minded.

A growth mindset, she says, is "based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts. Although people differ – in their initial talents, aptitudes, interests or temperaments – everyone can change and grow through application and experience." Now that's a very optimistic, I'm-in-control vision of life.

Conversely, a fixed mindset, by her description, is built on the belief a person's qualities are carved in stone and unchangeable... that attempting to improve your lot in life or achieve any degree of success beyond where you currently are, is impossible, futile, and seldom worth any effort.

Her 20 years of research has revealed: "...the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life."

Earl Nightingale, pioneer of the self-help industry, said much the same thing in his book "The Strangest Secret"... that in fact you are now, and you do become, what you think about most.

Dr. Robert Schuller, founder of the Crystal Cathedral, often referred to the risk-taking group as 'possibility thinkers'.

Political pundits also split us into two large breakouts. But wait – their dividing line is profoundly different. It's separated by ideology. Meaning, everyone falls into one of two political parties... Democrat or Republican... liberal or conservative. This is patently false. There are growth-minded people in both parties... and fixed-minded people in both parties.

Another observation I hold is this: belief need not precede action or achievement. Many people preach the opposite – that you must first believe something in order to achieve it. That, too, is patently false. Many successful people did not believe in the beginning that success was assured or eminent. But they started down the path and took action anyway. And through repeated trial, error, and occasional haphazard success... they slowly began to turn... and eventually developed a riveting positive belief... which snowballed into even greater success.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

It would be smart for you to take a brutally honest look in the mirror. Which camp do you fall in?

If you have a positive, growth-oriented, continuous-learning, constant-improvement, create-your-own-destiny, take-action mindset... great! Your odds of success – in any endeavor you passionately put your mind to – are greatly enhanced.

BUT... if you're locked in a can't-change, is-what-it-is, not-my-fault, world-is-against-me, can't-teach-an-old-dog-new-tricks mindset... well, that's like trying to drive a car down the street with no air in the tires, no gas in the tank, and a dead battery. Good luck. You'll need it.

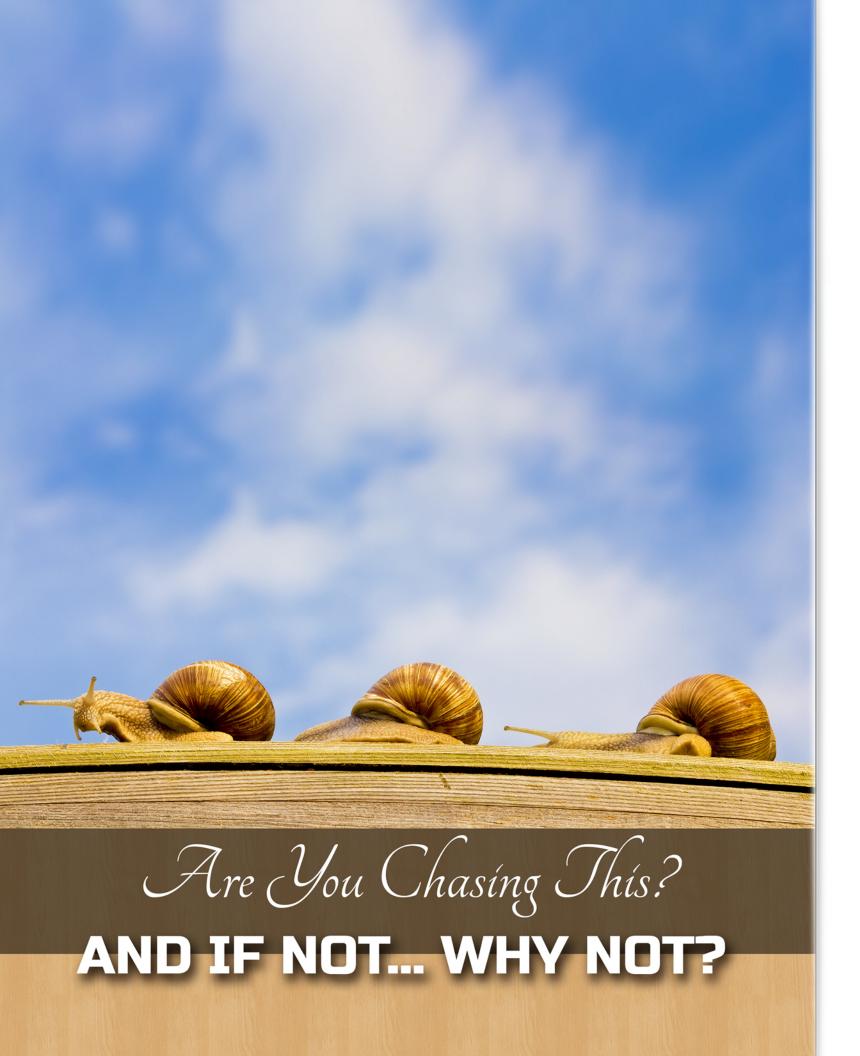
Here's the worst news. Those in the second group... almost always think they're in the first group. (Don't believe me? Just ask them.) They're lying to themselves... which gets them nowhere and only perpetuates their misery and negativity.

So... be in Group 1. The scenery of life is spectacularly better.

Here's a closing Power Thought from Samuel Johnson, 18th Century poet, essayist, literary critic and biographer: "My dear friend, clear your mind of can't."

SAVVY MOVE #2

Get your mind around growth, improvement, and forward movement... and create a lofty vision for your life.



Words frequently spoken when someone fails, messes up, or makes a mistake are: "Hey, what do you expect? I'm not perfect."

I'll bet you've said it. I have.

Webster defines perfection as being entirely without fault or defect. Based on that, yes, of course, human beings are not perfect. That's a universal truth and I take no issue with it.

But here's what I do take issue with: a person's unwillingness to shoot for perfection, despite the assumed futility of the effort.

Fact is, in some circles, perfection actually CAN happen...

In bowling, shooting 300... is a 'perfect game'.

A man with impeccable manners, who obeys the rules of etiquette, and treats a lady with dignity, is often referred to as a 'perfect gentleman'.

A document created with no misspellings, no grammatical errors, proper spacing and form... is said to be 'letter perfect'.

In baseball, a pitcher who throws an entire game with no hits, no runs, no errors, no walks, no wild pitches and no past balls... has thrown a 'perfect game'.

A round line with diameter equal at all spots... is a 'perfect circle'.

It's true, those are man-made definitions, but the point is, those perfect outcomes are possible, not impossible.

I suppose I resonate most with these words by Vince Lombardi, spoken in 1959 in his first speech to his new team, the hapless

(at the time) Green Bay Packers, when he took over the head coaching reins:

"Gentlemen, we will chase perfection and we will chase it relentlessly, knowing full well we can never attain it, because nothing is perfect. But we're going to chase it. Because in the process, we will catch excellence."

Catch it they did, winning 5 championships in his 9 years as head coach, giving Green Bay the enviable moniker: "Title Town".

The bottom line for me is – and on this I agree with Lombardi – excellence is best achieved – not by pursuing excellence itself – but by doggedly and relentlessly chasing something bigger.

That elusive perfection. Some argue this view.

Novelist George Orwell said "The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection."

Political columnist George Will says "The pursuit of perfection often impedes improvement."

I respectfully disagree with both.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

On your next passionate pursuit, whatever it is, why not, before you start, try first defining what 'perfection' is to you.

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A clear, measurable definition, if possible.

Then, go for THAT.

Former baseball pitcher Orel Hershiser summed it up brilliantly: (paraphrasing) I go out to throw a perfect game every time. If the first batter gets a hit, well, then I figure the past is history, the future is still perfect. So now I'll throw a perfect game from this point on.

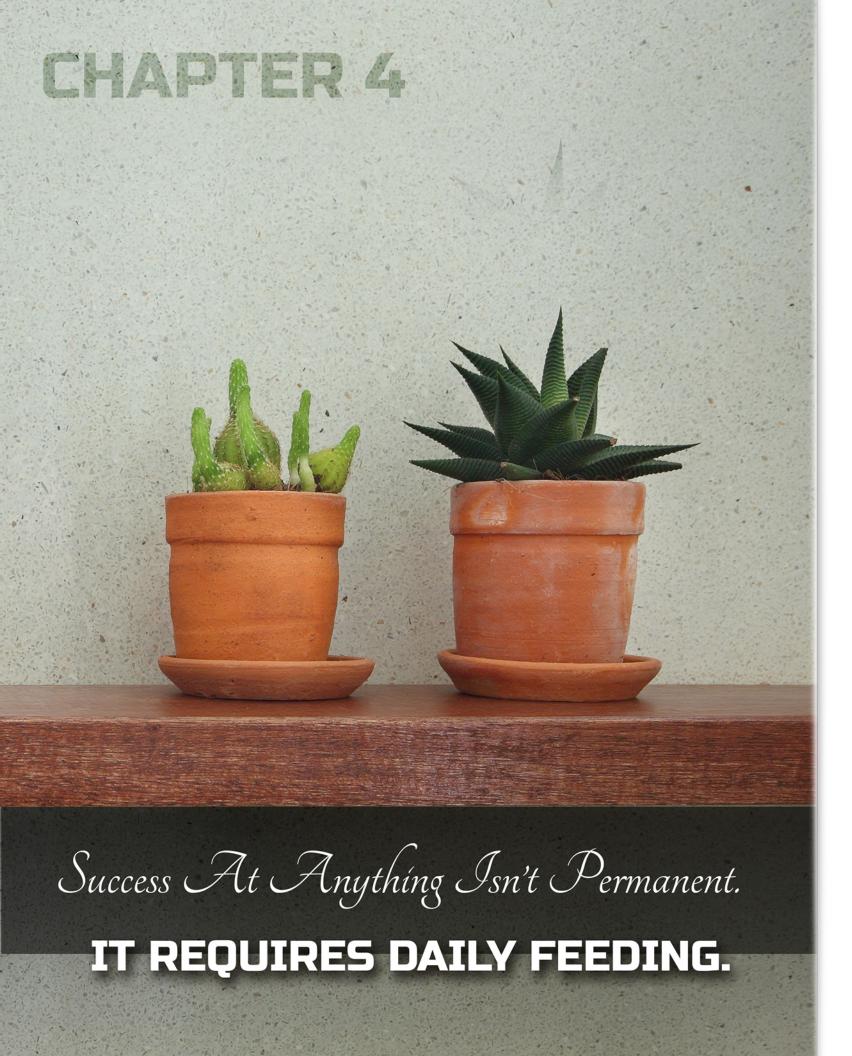
In other words, he accepted that imperfection would creep in, but immediately refocused himself on perfection again, from that point forward. I like that. A lot.

How about you? If you want to be brilliantly good at something... anything... how far will you push yourself to get it?

Here's a closing Power Thought from Lord Chesterfield, British statesman and author: "Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable. However, they who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable."

SAVVY MOVE #3

Vigorously and relentlessly pursue perfection in all important endeavors.
You may not achieve it, but so what? In the process, you'll achieve excellence.



You wouldn't dare think of brushing your teeth for 24 straight hours, then not brushing them again for 2 full years... fooling yourself into believing all that concentrated attention will keep them forever clean, fresh, and cavity-free... would you?

Nor would you sleep for 24 straight hours, for 30 consecutive days, then not again for 2 full years, believing that heavily-excessive, bunched-up volume of sleep carries you over... right?

No, of course not. That would be preposterous.

We know we have to brush our teeth a few times a day, for a few minutes each time... EVERY day.

We know we have to sleep several hours a night... EVERY night.

Same logic applies to eating, to exercise, even watering your plants. Over-doing any of those all at once in heavy concentration – then not doing them at all for a lengthy stretch – is a formula for failure, not success.

In fact, most things in life are just like that... requiring a little daily attention and activity, almost every day, for your entire life.

As a general rule, it's best to follow this hypothesis: Success at anything requires daily feeding. Accent on 'daily'.

I believe most reasonable people understand this concept and probably wouldn't argue it.

So why, then, don't most do it?

Zig Ziglar, author/salesman/motivational speaker, said: "Life has so many negatives and demotivations that it takes effort to stay motivated. To remain motivated, I've got to deliberately plan to take care of my thinking each day with a 'check-up from the neck up'."

That... makes complete sense.

<u>ACTIONS FOR YOU:</u>

In a nutshell, on all your major life goals and endeavors – who you desire to be, what you wish to accomplish, and things you want to have – do a little bit every day. Or at least several times a week.

Yes, it's true, on some things, you can do it all at once and be done. Project over. But on most things in life... no.

Personal performance expert Jim Rohn said: "Success is steady progress toward one's personal goals." Notice that word 'steady'.

On her fitness regimen, model/actress Molly Sims says: "For an hour every day, I did something. I was on the elliptical or the treadmill, and if someone asked me to go to a class – whether it was spinning, boxing, yoga, you name it

– I went. By the end of the month, I felt so good, I just kept going. I didn't want to lose my momentum."

Works in relationships too. A CEO client of mine shared: "I tell my wife I love her every day. Just telling her 20 times on our wedding day – and expecting that to last – would be lunacy. She deserves to hear it – and I enjoy reminding her – every single day – or our marriage would have fizzled long ago." Smart man. (Goes for wives telling their husbands too.)

Ziglar added: "Each day, I read and listen to something inspiring. I also associate with people who are making a difference with their lives because we are influenced by our associates, either positively or negatively. Read something good, listen to something good, and associate with good people as often as possible."

Spot a theme here?

You bet. It's this...

Success, essentially, is identifying 'winner behaviors', and sticking with them religiously, repeatedly, and continuously over an extended period of time. Every single day, if necessary.

No short cuts.
No quitting.
No back-sliding.

No excuses.

The willingness to follow this regimen separates winners from wannabes. Are your footprints on this path?

Here's a closing Power Thought from rock legend Bruce Springsteen, whose songs and concerts have been selling for decades, proving he works at it over and over and over. "Getting an audience is hard. Sustaining an audience is hard. It demands a consistency of thought, of purpose, and of action over a long period of time."

SAVVY MOVE #4

Identify the repeatable behaviors that drive success in any endeavor important to you... then do them every day... and don't miss a day.



My wife is a brilliant energy therapist, working exclusively to empower women – both one-to-one and in groups – and gets rave reviews from her clients, I'm proud to say.

She's just completed a series of empowerment workshops for a group of junior and senior girls at the University of Georgia. What she told me today was jarringly profound and has application for us all – men, women, old, young.

She told the girls a story of something that came to her in a meditation. (She hadn't even told me this.) She envisioned herself walking on a long, flowing, winding path of bricks – and the bricks suddenly came to an end – beyond which there was no more road. Only muddy slop.

Pondering this, it struck her that the bricks were symbolic – they had been laid by women before her whose job it was to create a path and lead the way for the generations of women behind them.

The end of the road meant it was now my wife's turn to lay new bricks to pave the way for the women who would follow her.

That, she intuited, is one of the most important meanings of life. That we are all here to extend the road. To be grateful for the bricklayers before us, and pay it forward, by building an ever-longer, ever-wider road to broaden the possibilities for those behind us. It's not elective, she thought, we all have an obligation to be bricklayers.

She went on to tell them that, no matter what mistakes they've made up to now, no matter what failures they've experienced or harm they've caused... they are fully capable, fully empowered, possess all the brilliance, and know all they need to know, to lay the bricks up ahead.

The girls were frozen in tears, trembling. Three jumped up, hugged her tightly, thanked her, and said no one had ever talked to them like that before. Others remarked they never saw themselves as worth much. Still others said they walked in feeling powerless and lost, but now had hope and inspiration.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

There was, of course, much more empowerment content to the workshop that played a role in the girls' emotional reaction, but that one story rung my bell. I tell it to you for several reasons.

Helping Other Adults:

If you're in a leader role (entrepreneur, CEO, department head, manager, supervisor, community leader, statesman, coach), never – never – assume the people on your team are getting encouragement elsewhere. Assume they're not.

YOU be the encourager. YOU be the fire lighter. YOU be the spirit lifter. YOU be the empowerment agent. And play those roles every day.

Helping Kids:

Start the day they're born and never let up. Believe even a baby in arms is listening and will be influenced, but just can't respond. Adolescents and teenagers desperately need to be exhilarated and emboldened – by parents, teachers, coaches, scout leaders. They are facing unbearable peer pressures and will feed off the guidance and 'you-can-do-it' encouragement of authority figures. Be one. Don't abdicate.

(I must admit, my wife had me in tears. Those girls feeling empty and disempowered broke my heart, and my first thought was: Where are their parents? Sure, it's natural for any young person to feel somewhat adrift going out into the world on their own – that's part of the growing up process. But unworthy? No one should feel unworthy. Somebody abdicated.)

Helping Yourself:

Don't expect the world to beat a path to your door and light your fire. If you have people in your life who do, you're lucky. Be grateful. Most don't. Either way, assume you're on your own and be your own fire lighter and spirit lifter. You can count on you to give yourself a shot of adrenaline – but you can't depend on other people to encourage you when you need it.

So put on your overalls, grab a wheelbarrow, and fill it with bricks. Cuz you and I – we've got work to do. There are roads that need building, widening, extending. It's part of our everyday life mission – yours and mine.

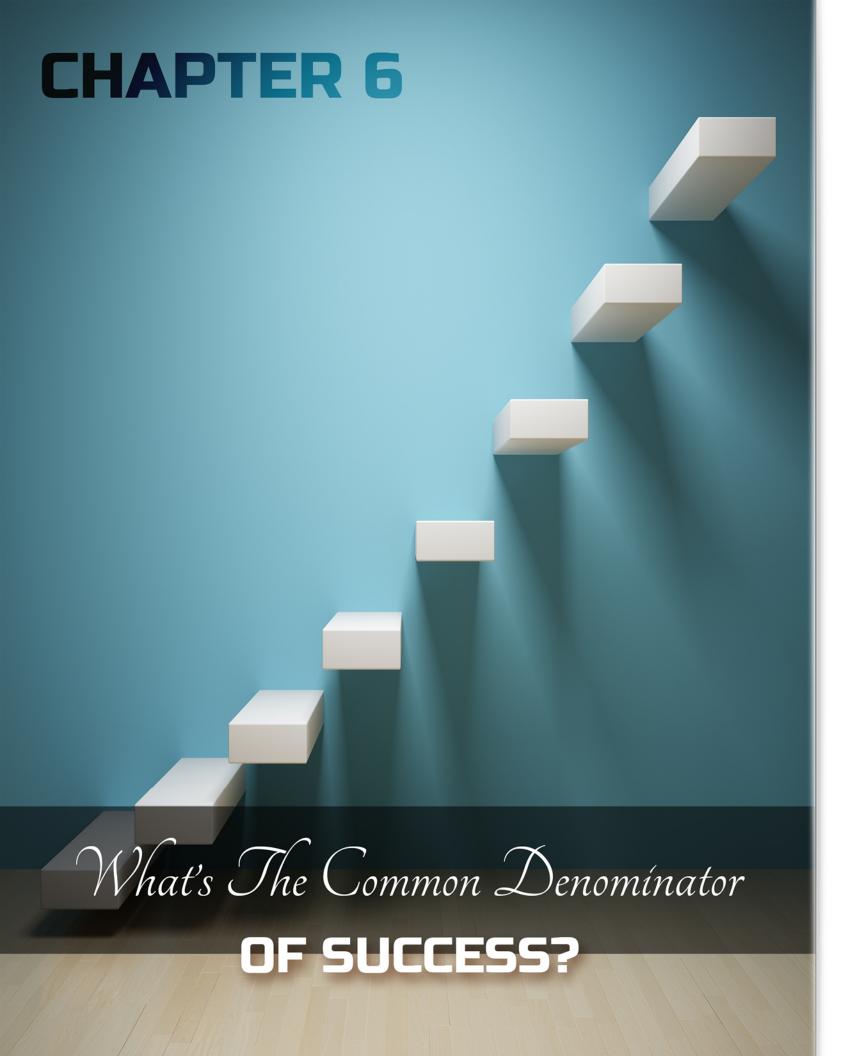
Let's get at it.

Here's a closing Power Thought from John Wooden, national championship college basketball coach at UCLA, and builder of boys into men: "You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you."

SAVVY MOVE #5

Live every day knowing that part of your life mission is to pass on your knowledge, teach your skills, and offer encouragement, to those behind you. Sometimes it's thankless – do it anyway.

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In 1940, a gentleman named Albert Gray gave a profound speech to a convention of insurance associates.

In it, he proclaimed this:

The common denominator of success – the secret of success of every man who has ever been successful – lies in the fact that he formed the habit of doing things failures don't like to do.

Pause for a moment and drink those words in. It is a lifechanging statement for you, and anyone, who chooses to embrace it.

Here's how it plays out...

If you wish to lose weight, it requires you to form the habit of doing what failed dieters don't like to do: eat healthy, stop eating unhealthy, exercise regularly, stop not exercising. It's a simple formula... it's worked for centuries... no shortcuts.

Want to learn a new craft or skill? Then form the habit of doing what failures at that skill don't like to do: find a qualified learning source (or several), study relentlessly, practice diligently, and sacrifice other things that get in the way, even some things you enjoy. Failures hate all that. Too much work. Horribly unpleasant.

Want to climb the ladder in business? Then do what failures won't and don't. Courageously tell management where

you'd like to go in the company, map out a plan to get there, find a coach or mentor to teach necessary skills, aggressively and eagerly tackle all tasks laid out, work over lunch hours, read books, attend seminars, join a peer group, network to create relationships, scour the internet for ideas, listen to learning programs in your car, arrive early and stay late, and for goodness sakes, be willing to devote lots of personal time (evenings, weekends) and personal expense to your own growth. Hmm, I think you'll find very little of that on a failure's agenda.

Want to be a better parent? Then form the habit of doing what bad parents don't want to do: be involved in your kids' lives, know where they are and who they're with, set clear behavioral boundaries that teach virtuous living, enforce curfews, monitor their actions, hold them accountable, discipline them for crossing the line, and stop being their 'best friend' and 'enabler' who gives a free pass for every indiscretion. Ouch, that's painful. Much easier to just give them everything they want and ask no questions.

You name the endeavor – in business, sports, civic, coaching, spiritual, wealth, social, a hobby, or anything in life – if you want to be successful at it, do what failures don't like to do.

Oh, and by the way, Albert Gray also discovered this: oftentimes successful people ALSO dislike doing those same things failures hate. The difference? They suck it up, gut it

out, and create the self-discipline to do them anyway. Even if uncomfortable or unfun.

Gray said successful people seek pleasing results. Failures seek pleasing actions. Best you know the difference.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Are you not getting the results you want in some specific area? Are you stumped about why?

Maybe you've been unwilling to shed failed behaviors or negative beliefs, and haven't eagerly adopted successful ones. (Okay, so you're human. We've all been there.)

But you can make a different choice. Starting today, starting right now.

If you want it bad enough, you have to be willing to do the unpleasant, the thankless, the painful, the mundane, the grueling, the necessary.

You may even have to disappoint, frustrate or anger other people, including those closest to you. Get over it. Just do it in a respectful and dignified way – never arrogant – but do it.

None of this is new or surprising.

At least not to those who regularly succeed.

Success always comes at a price.

If you're willing to pay it... if you're willing to do what failures don't like to do... even if you don't like doing it yourself... you dramatically increase your odds of achieving it.

Here's a closing Power Thought from George Washington Carver, inventor, botanist, agricultural chemist, teacher/researcher at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. "Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses."

SAVVY MOVE #6

If it's success you want, in any endeavor, then form the habit of doing whatever it takes to succeed – the things failures don't like to do – even if you don't like doing them either – and do them every day.

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Roger Goodell, NFL commissioner, once said in an interview that, after college, he decided he wanted to work for the NFL, so he pursued that course... but was rejected by them 50 times. "I handle rejection well," he said. "I stuck with it. I think in the end, they got tired of getting my letters."

He's not alone. Elvis Presley's 8th grade teacher told him he didn't have an aptitude for singing. Yet Elvis, later known to all as 'The King of Rock and Roll', achieved legendary musical and vocal success.

Emmy Award-winning broadcaster Sally Jessy Raphael was fired 18 times over a 30-year career. "I could have let those 18 firings prevent me from doing what I wanted," she said in a Reader's Digest article. "Instead, I let them spur me on."

Ah yes... rejection.

That ugly, vicious monster many people let stop them dead in their tracks and sabotage a promising future.

All because they couldn't get over the pain, saw it as a deathblow, and quit.

Only a small minority has the grit and tenacity to overcome repeated rejection.

And that's a good minority to be in.

Here are more examples...

Actor Sylvester Stallone says: "I take rejection as someone blowing a bugle in my ear to wake me up and get going, rather than retreat."

An unknown author named Theodor Geisel was rejected by 27 publishers for his first children's book, but he pressed on. #28 took a chance. That book – written by the man we came to know as Dr. Seuss – sold 6 million copies. Oh, by the way, he went on to write 44 books in total, translated into 15 languages, that sold more than 200 million copies.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur's childhood dream was to attend West Point. He applied, but was rejected twice. He didn't quit, and was accepted on his third attempt.

Actors Cary Grant, Richard Burton, Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford, and Liam Neeson are acclaimed as some of Hollywood's finest leading men – yet all have suffered Academy Award rejection, having never won the coveted Oscar. None let it stop them from brilliant acting careers.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

Hard to put it any better than Walt Disney himself: "You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you."

Elite soccer star David Beckham got his teeth-kick at age 13 when told by a coach that he'd never play for England because he was too small and not strong enough. That rejection strengthened Beckham's resolve... he not only played for England, but was 6-time team captain, earned global popularity, and became the face of soccer worldwide.

Here's what I think is the best 3-step medicine for rejection:

- Ignore it. Inwardly laugh in the face of it.
- **2.** Use it as an adrenaline stimulant to push yourself forward. It's rocket fuel.
- **3** Resolve to prove the rejecters wrong. Grit your teeth, clench your fist, and inwardly tell yourself: "Oh yeah? I'll show you."

That's what Tae Bo founder Billy Blanks did when, as a kid, his instructor sent him to the back of the class because he couldn't keep up. Blanks used his anger productively, becoming the first in his class to earn a black belt, followed by black belts in 6 different martial arts disciplines and 7 world karate championships.

Treat rejection as your friend, your inspiration, your accelerant. All the winners I've just told you about... they did.

You can too.

Here's a closing Power Thought from author Mark Amend: "Rejection doesn't mean you aren't good enough. It means the other person failed to notice what you have to offer."

SAVVY MOVE #7

Never let rejection be a deal-killer. See it instead as high-octane rocket fuel to propel you to do what the rejecter said you can't.

CHAPTER 8



Why You Should Never Quit...

NEVER GIVE UP... NEVER LET GO.

I admit it, I'm a sucker for a good comeback story.

Aren't you?

Few things are as inspirational as someone who is down – way down – who finds the strength to ignore their current state, get up, dust off, and fight their way back to victory. They remind us that rebounds are possible (they happen every day), being behind is temporary (if you want it to be), and above all, to quit our own bellyaching and just get at it (whining helps no one – action does).

Such comeback stories abound, and if you're looking for one – or need one at this moment – here are several that will light your fire. Listen to these...

At age 13, Bethany Hamilton – already a surfing champion – had her left arm bitten off by a tiger shark. Undaunted and ever-positive, she returned to competitive surfing within 30 days, and won a national title a year later. Not long after, she realized her life's dream to go pro.

Stephen Hawking, while studying physics and cosmology at both Oxford and Cambridge, contracted ALS disease and was given less than 3 years to live. Not to be stopped, Hawking dug deep into his work and became one of the most brilliant theoretical physicists in history. Today in

his 70s – more than 50 years since his diagnosis – he has authored several prolific scientific books for nonscientists.

Who could ignore the revitalization and rebuilding of both Japan and Germany after World War II? Both were in shambles, and took decades to slowly rebound, one brick at a time, to re-emerge as world powers. These are especially astounding achievements because they involved – not just one person or a small team – but entire nations.

Nelson Mandella spent 27 years in prison, yet later became president of South Africa.

Diana Nyad failed 4 times to swim the 103 miles from Cuba to Florida, cutting each attempt short due to complications from asthma attacks, jellyfish, and lightning strikes... but at age 64, successfully completed the journey... the first to do it without a protective cage. (That's right, 64!)

Abraham Lincoln failed twice in business, was defeated in election for state legislature, lost twice for U.S. House of Representatives, was defeated twice for U.S. Senate, and lost once for vice president... but ignored all that and ran for president anyway. And won. Twice.

Thomas Edison failed in 10,000 attempts to invent the incandescent electric light bulb, but never gave up, and eventually succeeded. He also failed 3000 times in his attempt to invent the filament – but did.

Technology maverick Steve Jobs was fired from Apple, the company he co-founded... but refusing to be squashed, he boomeranged to found 2 other companies, NeXT and Pixar Animation. He later returned as Apple CEO and revitalized it from the doldrums, adding to his legend.

University of Minnesota track star Heather Dorniden, competing in the 600-meter Big 10 championship, was in the lead with 200 meters to go – two-thirds of the way through the race – when she stumbled and fell to the track. Every other competitor zoomed by. Now well behind, she launched to her feet, stayed in the race, accelerated her pace, and with little distance left, caught the entire pack and beat them to the finish line – by a gnat's hair. (I've watched that video dozens of times and am filled with pride for her every time.)

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

So what, specifically, should you do? Perhaps the answer is contained on an Abe Lincoln plaque that hangs in my office: The difference between history's boldest accomplishments, and its most staggering failures, is often, simply, the diligent will to persevere.

Whether it's just you, or a team you're on, or a business you run, or a massive number of people you lead...

I think it boils down to 4 elements:

- Ignore past troubles (don't let them predict your future)...
- **2.** Tune out jeers and criticism from naysayers (most are jealous anyway)...
- **3** Never let go of your dream (it's what makes your heart pound)... and
- 4 Accelerate forward at full throttle with blinders on.

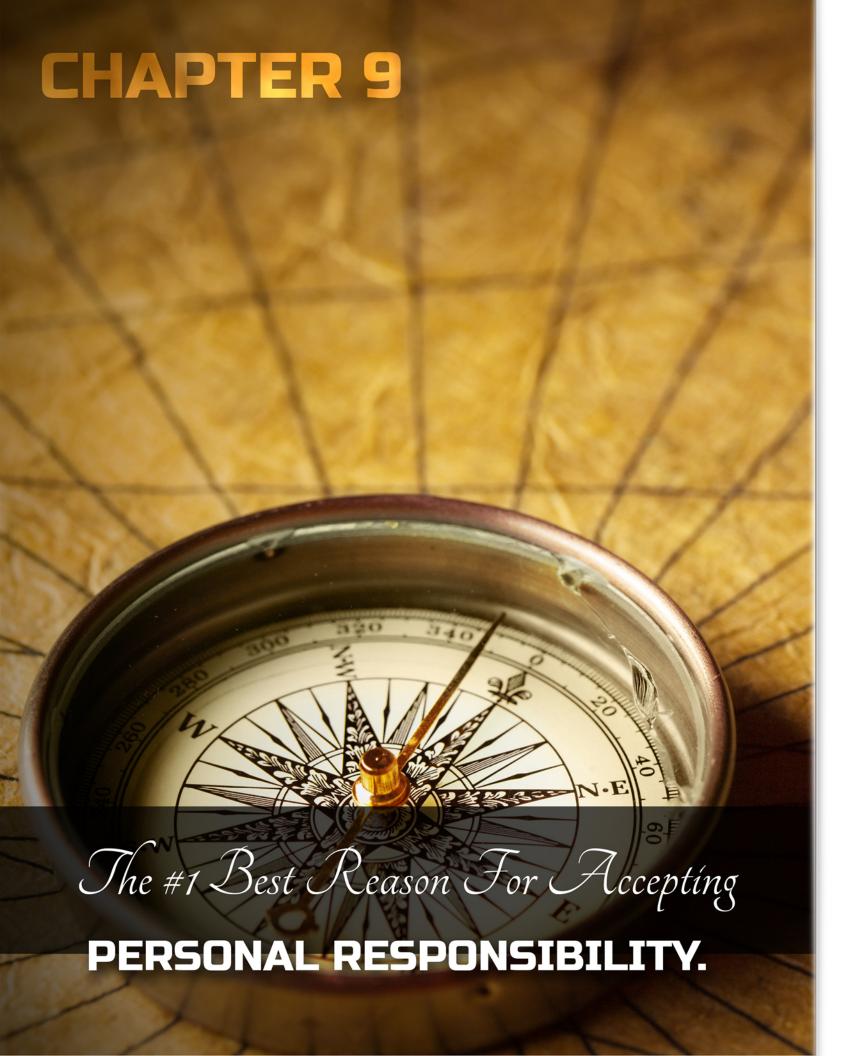
That's what Hamilton, Hawking, Japan, Germany, Mandella, Nyad, Lincoln, Edison, Jobs, and Dorniden did. Warriors all.

Never give up. You just might win.

Here's a closing Power Thought from J.C. Penney, founder of the JCPenney retail chain: "I am grateful for all of my problems. After each one was overcome, I became stronger and more able to meet those that were still to come. I grew in all my difficulties."

SAVVY MOVE #8

In anything you want badly, never give up, never quit, never give in.
Success could be just around the next bend.



Do you know what it is – the very best reason, by far, bar none, to accept personal responsibility for the decisions and actions you make in your life?

Well, I'll come to that in a minute. First, some context – and it's not good news.

Today, we live in a culture of ever-increasing laziness, irresponsibility, and blame. A large body of people have "entitlement mentality", believing the world owes them a job, a living, a good wage, and a place to live. And if they aren't handed these on a silver platter – with little or no effort on their part – they will happily live off the fruits and labors of others – and feel they deserve such handouts.

Worst of all, our government is encouraging it, making such a lifestyle attractive with entitlement programs that anyone with low initiative can cash in on. Adults who embrace this lifestyle are short-changing themselves... they're setting a horrible example for young people... and they're choosing a quality of life with a low ceiling.

Sadly, this movement is growing, and it is slowly destroying what America was built on: the grit and determination of ambitious people who came here to work hard, be free, and control their own destiny.

And yes, it's infecting young people too, not just adults. Here's some disturbing proof: A few years back, I wrote about a Valencia College professor who asked his 3 classes of 180 sophomores to write a 10-min. essay on what the American Dream means to them and what they feel the government should do to help them achieve it. 10% said: leave me alone. 80% said: pay my tuition, give me the down payment on a house, give me a job, give me free health care, and tax the wealthy so I can have a better life.

My assessment: a bunch of sniveling, lazy, gimme-gimme-gimme, little crybabies.

But wait... there is good news. You don't have to settle for this 'low bar' lifestyle. No one does. You can have bigger and better.

In fact, there's plenty for everyone. Because America is the land of abundance and opportunity. The evidence is all around you.

But there's a catch: it will require being personally responsible.

Those who choose a high-achieving life of 'personal responsibility' live by a different code. They take control of their circumstances, create their own opportunities, meticulously manage their time, live by the sweat of their own brow, fight off adversity, pick themselves up from defeat, understand that success comes from diligent and continuous hard work (not luck), and they don't blame events or other people for their misfortunes.

They own it! And they enjoy a high quality of life others only dream about, but may never attain. This can be you. This can be anybody.

And now back to the beginning: What's the #1 best reason for accepting personal responsibility for your decisions, your choices, your actions, your life?

It's simply this: Whatever is going wrong in your life, whatever you don't like about yourself or your circumstances... no matter how troubling... if you accept personal responsibility for it... along with that acceptance comes the power to change it to what you DO want.

ACTIONS FOR YOU:

My choice? I want control to fix... therefore, without blinking, I choose personal responsibility. And I eagerly make that choice brand-new every morning when I wake up.

You also get to choose. Tomorrow morning, what'll it be for you? And the next day? And the day after that?

Here's a closing Power Thought from author Peter McWilliams: "We are all, right now, living the life we choose."

SAVVY MOVE #9

Accepting personal responsibility for all your thoughts, choices, and actions will make you a high-integrity individual, win you many friends, and help you overcome the obstacles confronting you.

CLOSE

Well, there they are... the 9 savvy moves to help you self-motivate.

As a quick, condensed review, let's run through all 9 one more time. Here they are...

Savvy Move #1

Get crystal clear on what your passions are... what energizes and electrifies you. Then orchestrate your life... all your waking moments... to live and do only those.

Savvy Move #2

Get your mind around growth, improvement, and forward movement... and create a lofty vision for your life.

Savvy Move #3

Vigorously and relentlessly pursue perfection in all important endeavors. You may not achieve it, but so what? In the process, you'll achieve excellence.

Savvy Move #4

Identify the repeatable behaviors that drive success in any endeavor important to you... then do them every day... and don't miss a day.

Savvy Move #5

Live every day knowing that part of your life mission is to pass on your knowledge, teach your skills, and offer encouragement, to those behind you. Sometimes it's thankless – do it anyway.

Savvy Move #6

If it's success you want, in any endeavor, then form the habit of doing whatever it takes to succeed – the things failures don't like to do – even if you don't like doing them either – and do them every day.

Savvy Move #7

Never let rejection be a deal-killer. See it instead as highoctane rocket fuel to propel you to do what the rejecter said you can't.

Savvy Move #8

In anything you want badly, never give up, never quit, never give in. Success could be just around the next bend.

Savvy Move #9

Accepting personal responsibility for all your thoughts, choices, and actions will make you a high-integrity individual, win you many friends, and help you overcome the obstacles confronting you.

WELL, THAT'S ALL 9.

Why not find a quiet place and read these out loud every morning? Sort of your own personal selfmotivational pep talk with yourself.

Each one is a positive affirmation for success... and a powerful way to light your own fire every day.

WHAT IN THE WORLD

is author Rick Houcek up to?

Here's some of what he's done... and is still doing...

- Has led nearly 300 high-stakes strategic planning retreats for small and mid-size companies with his proprietary Power Planning™ Strategic Retreat process
- Delivered more than 600 live keynote and workshop presentations to audiences of all sizes in the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland on high achievement and peak performance themes
- Led/participated in more than 610 CEO and senior executive peer group meetings over 25 years
- Runs his Leadership Excellence Academy for people in charge
- Served more than 460 advertising clients in an 18-year ad agency career
- Authored 11 audio/ebooks
- Co-authored 7 print books
- Writes an ongoing e-newsletter for growth-driven leaders, change agents, and high achievers
- Was president of Ross Roy Advertising, an Atlanta ad agency and division of the \$700 million Ross Roy Group
- Is member of National Speakers Association
- Recognized in Who's Who Among U.S. Executives
- Recognized in Who's Who in Georgia
- Recognized in Who's Who Among American Student Leaders

ATTENTION CEOS:

Are You Operating Without A Strategic Plan?

You're playing blind archery if you are. Worse, there's debilitating confusion among your staff and it's doubtful anyone's telling you. How can they perform in a fog? How can your desired results be achieved when your leadership team isn't bought into a common vision? Here's how to fix it: Rick Houcek leads strategy retreats for small & mid-size businesses using his dynamic Power PlanningTM process. His Escape-Proof AccountabilityTM system overcomes the crippling effects of lousy execution – the single biggest cause of plan failure. Everyone leaves on the same page. For details, visit www. SoarWithEagles.com. Be sure to read the priceless praise from prestigious CEO clients about value they gained.

ATTENTION MANAGERS:

Looking For An Innovative Way To Grow Your People? Consider bringing in Rick Houcek's dynamic "Self-Motivation For Winners" personal goal workshop for your employees. This is 'life planning' at its best – not business goal setting – and it assures staff members you care about them, their families, their lives. Invite spouses too. For details, go to www.SoarWithEagles.com.

ATTENTION MEETING PLANNERS:

Need a High-Energy Speaker For Your Next Conference? Could your team use a jolt of inspiration? How about content-rich, battle-tested ideas on leadership excellence, self-motivation, winner behavior, or personal goal setting? Why not bring in Rick Houcek to speak at your annual meeting, team offsite, or industry conference? For topics and information, go to www.SoarWithEagles.com. Read what clients have said about value they gained — their words are gold!

A wee bit more about Rick...

Rick Houcek's singular company purpose is: To provide high-octane, world-class strategic planning systems for business and life, helping top gun leaders, teams and individuals to succeed 'on purpose, most of the time,' rather than 'by accident, some of the time.'

A University of Missouri graduate, Rick has 4 fanatical life passions: family, health/fitness, helping others prosper through his business and friendships, and playing competitive baseball.

